The Conference Holds 111th Meeting

The International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards held its 111th Annual Meeting February 25 – 26, 2015, at Hilton Dallas Lincoln Centre in Dallas, Texas. The two day event focused on regulation in the death care profession and was attended by members of the regulatory community from throughout the United States and Canada.

Moderated by Douglas “Mack” Smith, the Board Member Training Program was held for the third consecutive year. The two-day program included a series of discussions led by Dale Atkinson, of Atkinson & Atkinson, LLC., that focused on familiarizing regulatory board members with the roles and responsibilities of serving on a funeral service regulatory board. Seminar topics included: the role of a regulatory board member, the role of the board, delegation of authority, conflicts of interest, board outreach, social media, immunity, and other current regulatory issues. Attendees from eight jurisdictions participated in an exercise that focused on problematic scenarios involving board regulation.

Wednesday morning included two pre-meeting sessions. The annual meeting of the Association of Executives of Funeral Service Boards (AEFSB) met for the 14th time during the Funeral Service Administrator’s Forum. The forum gave regulatory board executives an opportunity to discuss current issues in funeral service regulation with their peers from across North America. The second pre-meeting session was the Examination Services Forum, led by Examination Program Manager for The Conference, Sarah Gill. Attendees had the opportunity to learn about new policies and procedures regarding the Conference exam program and its future.

The Annual Meeting was officially called to order that afternoon by President Bart Burton. Mr. Burton welcomed all regulators, educators, and funeral service professionals in attendance. During the business meeting, Lisa Moore, the Chair of the Model Practice Act Committee, presented on the completion of The Conference Model Practice Act for Funeral Service. Ms. Moore updated attendees on the development process, makeup of the committee, and discussed focus areas of The Act. Following her presentation the floor was open for questions and discussion regarding the document. In a vote 24-1, the Conference Model Practice Act for Funeral Service was adopted.

Also on the agenda for the business meeting was a by-law amendment proposal by the Maryland Board of Morticians and Funeral Directors. The amendment centered on Section 3 of the by-laws, Board of Directors Eligibility. After discussion on the floor the proposed amendment failed.

Following the business meeting, attorney Jennifer Semko from Baker and Mackenzie, LLP, gave a presentation on examination security legal issues. Ms. Semko expressed the importance of examination security and the best practices to follow before, during, and after examinations. During her presentation, Ms. Semko discussed various legal principles including ex parte seizures. Conference legal counsel, Dale Atkinson, gave attendees an update on recent cases involving different regulatory professions nationwide and discussed what regulators and attendees could learn from each case.

The second day began with a presentation on statutory authority and
Public Protection: A Commitment to Uphold

The Conference strives to provide an array of services with the ultimate goal of public protection. These services are the cornerstone of the belief that service to the consumer is best provided by funeral service practitioners who are regulated through common values, ethics and best practice standards of the profession.

The Conference is dedicated to maintaining, preserving, and continuously building the examination services program, ensuring that exams offered by The Conference are consistently reliable and indicate professional competency in the funeral service field and that member boards are provided with verified examination results.

The Conference is dedicated to being a leader in information and regulatory support for the death care profession by constantly monitoring the regulatory environment and providing services to meet the needs of funeral service regulatory boards. A primary focus of The Conference is to improve consistency across our member jurisdictions. One aspect includes the ongoing maintenance of the recently adopted Model Practice Act for Funeral Service for member regulatory boards to reference in writing and improving their own laws and regulations.

Dr. Hari P. Close II, CFSP, was elected President, A.R. "Sandy" Mahon was elected to serve as Vice President and Edward Muhleisen was elected to serve as Secretary/Treasurer. After Mr. Burton presented Dr. Close with the President's Gavel, the 2015-2016 Board of Directors were officially sworn in.

The afternoon continued with a panel discussion on alternative certifications. Peter Burke of the North Carolina Board of Funeral Service and District 3 Director of The Conference, Jennifer Kandt of the Nevada Funeral Board, and Vanessa Neikamp of the Ohio Board of Embalmers and Funeral Directors were the panel participants and engaged attendees in discussion surrounding the regulation and requirements of the emerging fields within the industry.

For the final session of the day, attendees were divided into six teams for a group exercise. This year, the group exercise focused on enhancing licensure portability. Each team was assigned a specific topic to review and discuss. The topics included: reciprocal agreements, communication, the implementation of the Model Practice Act, national registry for funeral service, model documents, and licensure requirements. At the end of the group exercise, each team reported on potential obstacles and solutions to the issues that each topic presented. At the conclusion of the Annual Meeting, President Burton thanked everyone for making this year's meeting a success and invited everyone to the 112th Annual Meeting in Newport Beach, California.

Annual Meeting Continued

 examining the scope of the board from Mark Evely, Attorney and Program Director of the Mortuary Science Program at Wayne State University. Mr. Evely shared the experiences Michigan has had with codifying and repealing administrative rules related to mortuary science.

Ruth Ann Arty, Executive Director of the Maryland Board of Morticians and Funeral Directors gave an overview of overcoming obstacles in instituting cremation regulation. Ms. Arty presented on the experience the state of Maryland had between two agencies working together to pass regulation for cremation and the collaboration process involved in its execution.

District meetings followed the morning sessions. These meetings gave attendees an opportunity to discuss issues and best practices with fellow regulators from other districts. Meeting topics included what individual licenses look like and if a photo, examination retake policies, alkaline hydrolysis, regulation jurisdiction rule books, pre-need funding, and recent legal cases. During the district meetings, elections were held for districts four, six, and eight.

Mark Ransford a board member from the Michigan Board of Examiners in Mortuary Science was elected to serve as District 4 Director. Douglas “Mack” Smith, Executive Secretary of the Kansas Board of Mortuary Arts, was elected to a second term as District 6 Director. After completing his predecessor’s term, A.R. “Sandy” Mahon was elected to serve as District 8 Director.

Thursday afternoon kicked off with the annual awards luncheon. Following the district meeting and AEFSB reports, President Bart Burton recognized Past President Gail Thomas-DeWitt for the time she served on the Board of Directors and for her dedication to The Conference. President Burton then presented Dalene Paull with the President’s Distinguished Service Award and recognized her for her ongoing commitment, leadership, and outstanding service to The Conference. Ms. Paull has been with The Conference since 1997 and has served as Executive Director since 2002.

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Through meetings and seminars, The Conference is a provider of continuing education credits, and continues to develop its CE programs. Since 2012, The Board Member Training Program has familiarized board members on their roles, responsibilities, and expectations.

Though multiple outlets, The Conference provides information to its member boards, examination candidates, students, licensed professionals, and anyone interested in the profession:

- Via the web at theconferenceonline.org
- By telephone: 479-442-7076
- At the Annual Meeting
- During annual Board Member Training sessions
- Through this newsletter, The Conference Report, and its enewsletter, The Conference Update
- Through various other publications
Big Ideas Come Out of The Big D

The attendee favored group exercise brought forth many innovative ideas to The Conference’s mission of improving Licensure Portability for the funeral service profession. Attendees from 20 states, three Canadian provinces, and representatives from the ABFSE accredited colleges participated in six groups addressing issues related to Licensure Portability. With the conclusion of the Conference Model Practice Act, one group was tasked with an implementation plan and review schedule. The participants concluded a standard review on an annual basis would be sufficient along with the suggested promotion of The Act through The Conference website as well as soliciting input from associations.

Reciprocal agreements were discussed in determining that a combination license is more difficult to transfer. Attendees noted that separate licenses are easier to compare which make for easier licensure transfers. One suggestion was to reach out to ABFSE accredited programs to teach different curriculums for each license while lobbying across the country for the differential licenses as well.

Another group addressed Licensure Requirements for single licenses while considering pros and cons of each. The group felt that a potential benefit of setting parameters for a single license would be that it would allow a second career path for individuals who want to be funeral directors only. The group also discussed barriers to the profession in regards to the shortage of quality employees.

The group assigned with Communication came up with a state-of-the-art way to facilitate quick and easy access to information with the development of an app that would allow filters to control information received. The group suggested three main categories of interest including: disciplinary actions, legislation, and court decisions. A National Registry for Funeral Service was assigned to another group who discussed the benefits and challenges to creating a registry. A database accessible by regulatory boards that would hold critical information for all licensees was viewed as a major advantage. Funding and the initial retrieving/entering process of licensee information along with the continual maintenance were seen as problematic but could be overcome.

Model Documents for initial licensure and commonalities between jurisdictions in the group were discussed. Several requirements were uniform across the country including:

- a standard application, background check, certified NBE scores, proof of consistent practice, etc. The group concluded that a model application including these items would be beneficial for membership use.

Let The Conference Be Your Clearinghouse

In a further effort to keep our finger on the pulse of regulatory issues, The Conference continues to be a member of professional regulatory organizations including the Federation of Associations of Regulatory Boards, the Council on Licensure Enforcement and Regulation, the Institute for Credentialing Excellence, and the American Society of Association Executives. The Conference also strives to attend profession meetings such as International Cemetery, Cremation, and Funeral Association and the Funeral Services Association of Canada.

As a reminder, The Conference also acts as a clearinghouse of information and our members frequently submit questions that we distribute on their behalf regarding issues of interest to their particular jurisdiction. Below are some recent issues we have had requests for.

- Software or application used for inspection reports.
- Re-appointment cycles to the state board.
- Process of selling funeral goods and services by cemeteries who do not have a funeral establishment on site.

If your jurisdiction has a question and would like The Conference to poll the membership, please contact Member Services Manager, Lauren Thomas at services@theconferenceonline.org. As always, we appreciate those of you who take the time to respond to questions as they are brought forward.

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Board Member Training Program Continues

For the third consecutive year, a Board Member Training session was held prior to the Annual Meeting. The Conference welcomed back two previous participants from Alberta and Maryland along with attendees from funeral service boards in: Alabama, Delaware, Michigan, Nevada, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Washington. The Conference is pleased to add the following names to the Board Member Training completion list:

- Pete Cameron
- Joe Highberger
- Valdus Lockhart
- Victor March
- Calvin Meadows
- S. Keith Parsell
- Mark Ransford
- Henna Rasul
- Verna Rock
- John Rudder
- Peter Shaw
- Todd Shifflett

The Conference Awards NBE Scholarships

The Board of Directors of The International Conference of Funeral Service Examining Boards has selected 10 recipients to receive the National Board Examination (NBE) Scholarship. Each ABFSE accredited program was invited to submit one candidate name to The Conference based on their own criteria.

Winners were selected at random during the Board of Directors Meeting on February 24, 2015 in Dallas, Texas. The NBE Scholarship allows each recipient to sit for the NBE with the $500 examination fee waived. The 2015 NBE Scholarship recipients are as follows:

- Chevarres Brown, Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College
- Anne Christ, University of Minnesota
- Daniel Hensley, Community College of Baltimore County
- Garrett D. Holland, Fayetteville Technical Community College
- Tricia Lawrence, St. Petersburg College
- Robert S. Lewis, Lake Washington Technical College
- Kendra Oliver, University of Arkansas Community College at Hope
- Erwin H. Shea, III, John A. Gupton College
- Shantasky Washington, San Antonio College
- Carrie Yarbrough, Dallas Institute of Funeral Service

Model Practice Act For Funeral Service Adopted

The Conference is proud to announce the recent adoption of the Conference Model Practice Act for Funeral Service (MPA) by the delegate assembly on February 25, 2015 in Dallas, Texas. The adoption was the final phase in completing the MPA after a rigorous 18 month construction process by the committee. The final product has been distributed to member boards and additional copies are available upon request.

The MPA will be reviewed periodically to maintain its validity and up-to-date knowledge in compliance with industry changes and trends. Please submit any comments or questions you may have regarding the MPA to Lauren Thomas, Member Services Manager, at services@theconferenceonline.org.

From Left: Charles Perine, Peter Burke, Lisa Moore, and Lorin Doyle are recognized for their work on the Model Practice Act Committee. Not Pictured: Kelly Bird, Gary Clark, Lisa Hahn, Lynn Newman, Thersa Schwartz

2015 Board of Directors Election Results

Elections to The Conference Board of Directors were held during the 111th Annual Meeting of The Conference for Districts one, four, six, and eight. The following individuals were elected.

- District 1: vacant
- District 4: Mark Ransford, Board Member of the Michigan Board of Examiners in Mortuary Science was elected to his first term.
- District 6: Douglas “Mack” Smith, Executive Secretary of the Kansas Board of Mortuary Arts was elected to serve a second term.
- District 8: A.R. “Sandy” Mahon, Registrar of the Funeral and Cremation Services Council of Saskatchewan, was elected to serve his first term after being elected in 2014 to serve out his predecessor’s term.
Executive Committee Elected

New officers were elected to the Executive Committee of The Conference Board of Directors at the board meeting in Dallas, TX. Dr. Hari P. Close, II, CFSP, was elected President, A.R. Sandy Mahon, was elected Vice President, and Edward Muhleisen was elected Secretary/Treasurer. As Past President, Bart Burton remains a member of the executive committee.

Dr. Close was elected to the Conference Board of Directors in 2011. He was elected Secretary and Treasurer in 2013 and Vice President in 2014. As District 2 Director, he represents funeral service regulators from Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, and Washington, D.C. “I deem it an honor and privilege to chair this vital organization of regulators for our noble profession,” said Dr. Close on being elected President of The Conference.

Dr. Close served as the president of the State Board of Morticians and Funeral Directors of Maryland from 2008-2013. He is the owner and managing director of Hari P. Close Funeral Service, P.A. He is the former Executive Director/CEO of the National Funeral Directors and Morticians Association, Inc.

Dr. Close holds an Associate of Arts in Mortuary Science from the Institute of Funeral Service and Embalmers and Funeral Directors at Dallas Institute of Funeral Service. He also holds a Master of Arts in Theology from Eastern Theological Seminary, a Doctor of Divinity in Bible Instruction from the Bible Institute, and a Doctor of Divinity from Eastern Theological Seminary.

Mr. Mahon was also elected to his first term on the Board of Directors as District 8 Director. He was appointed to The Conference Board of Directors in 2013 and elected to fill out his predecessor’s term in 2014. As District 8 Director, he represents funeral service regulators from Alaska, Alberta, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Saskatchewan, Washington, and Wyoming. He has also served as both Secretary and Vice-President of The Association of Executives of Funeral Service Boards.

Mr. Mahon is the Registrar for the Funeral and Cremation Services Council of Saskatchewan and has been employed by the Council since 2005. He was formerly a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and retired at the rank of Sergeant Major. The latter part of his career in the RCMP was spent in a variety of training functions. He has a Certificate in Adult Education from St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. Sandy and his wife, Katherine, reside in Regina, Saskatchewan.

During the event, Mr. Muhleisen was elected to serve as Secretary and Treasurer. He was elected District 7 Director in 2014. He represents funeral service regulators from Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. He is a board member of the Louisiana State Board of Embalmers and Funeral Directors and is the Manager of L.A. Muhleisen and Son Funeral Home, Kenner, LA.

Mr. Muhleisen graduated from Holy Cross High School in 1995 and from Louisiana State University in 2000. Mr. Muhleisen attended mortuary science school at Dallas Institute of Funeral Service and graduated as salutatorian in 2002. His professional affiliations include: the National Funeral Directors Association, the Louisiana Funeral Directors Association, the Cremation Association of North America and Selected Independent Funeral Homes.

Bart Burton rounds out the Executive Committee as Past President. Mr. Burton was appointed to The Conference Board of Directors in 2010 and was elected in 2011. He was elected Secretary/Treasurer in 2012 and Vice President in 2013. Mr. Burton has been served as President of The Conference from October of 2013 to the time Dr. Close was elected in February, 2015. As District 9 Director, he represents funeral service regulators from Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Nevada, and Utah.

Mr. Burton was appointed to the Nevada State Board of Funeral Directors and Embalmers in 2007. He is currently the manager of the Palm Mortuary Care Center in Las Vegas, Nevada. He has been employed at Palm Mortuary since 1985.

Candidate Services Coordinator

The Conference is pleased to announce that Allie Sparkman has been hired as the full-time Candidate Services Coordinator. As Candidate Services Coordinator, Ms. Sparkman will guide candidates through the exam process.

Ms. Sparkman was hired by The Conference in 2012 as an Administrative Assistant and has been working as Candidate Services Coordinator in a part-time capacity since 2013. Allie Sparkman can be reached at allie@theconferenceonline.org.
**NBE Quarterly Statistics**

**January 1, 2015 - March 31, 2015**

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For a full listing of quarterly stats, please visit [www.theconferenceonline.org/resources/nbe-statistics/](http://www.theconferenceonline.org/resources/nbe-statistics/)

**Upcoming Jurisdiction Board Meetings**

- **Alabama** – 7/13, 10/5
- **Arizona** – 5/19, 6/16, 7/21, 8/18, 9/15, 10/20, 11/17, 12/15
- **Connecticut** – 6/2, 9/3, 11/5
- **Delaware** – 5/26, 7/28, 9/22, 11/24
- **D.C.** – 6/4, 7/2, 9/3, 10/1, 11/5, 12/3
- **Florida** – 6/4, 6/25, 7/9, 8/6, 9/3, 10/1, 11/5, 12/3
- **Georgia** – 6/9, 7/14, 8/11, 9/8, 10/13, 11/10, 12/8
- **Illinois** – 6/19
- **Indiana** – 6/4, 8/6, 10/1, 12/3
- **Iowa** – 6/4, 9/3, 12/3
- **Kansas** – 7/9, 10/8
- **Louisiana** – 5/13-14
- **Maine** – 7/14, 9/8, 11/10
- **Maryland** – 5/13, 6/10, 7/8, 9/9, 10/14, 11/11, 12/9
- **Michigan** – 10/8
- **Nebraska** – 6/25, 10/14
- **Nevada** – 7/14, 10/13
- **North Carolina** – 6/10, 7/8, 8/12, 9/9, 10/14, 11/4, 12/9
- **Oklahoma** – 5/14, 6/11, 7/9, 8/13, 9/10, 10/8, 11/12, 12/10
- **Oregon** – 6/9, 7/31, 9/29, 11/17
- **Pennsylvania** – 5/28, 7/1, 8/5, 9/23, 10/28, 12/2
- **Rhode Island** – 6/15, 10/19
- **Saskatchewan** – 5/20, 6/25, 9/10, 10/15, 11/19, 12/17
- **South Carolina** – 5/20, 6/10, 7/23, 8/12, 10/22, 12/9
- **Tennessee** – 6/9, 7/14, 8/11, 9/8, 10/13, 11/10, 12/8
- **Texas** – 6/9, 9/15, 12/8
- **Utah** – 5/20, 8/19, 12/18
- **Virginia** – 7/14, 10/20
- **Washington** – 8/4, 11/13
- **Wisconsin** – 5/19, 8/4, 11/17

* The Conference welcomes any contributions from member jurisdictions. Please submit items to info@theconferenceonline.org.

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